Reorganization of the Ministry of Social Services under the NDP

A significant reorganization of the Ministry of Social Services occurred in 1996 that had a bearing on community living services. In 1995/1996, the Ministry of Social Services consisted of the following major branches:

- Income Support Programs (Income Assistance; Health Services;[165] Federal/Provincial Activities; Prevention, Compliance & Enforcement)
- Community Support Services (Community Support Services; Community Placement; Woodlands; Information and Privacy; Services for Community Living)
- Child, Family & Community Services, and Regional Operations (Child, Family and Community Services, Adoption Services, Child Protection Consultation Services under nine regional administrative units).

Initiated after the death of Matthew Vaudreuil, a child who was a client of the child protection system, the government launched a commission of Enquiry into the state of child protection services in BC. The inquiry focused primarily on child protection services, but also reviewed child and youth services provided by all Ministries of the province. In his report of 1995 (*Report of the Gove Inquiry into Child Protection*), Judge Thomas J. Gove identified that public services to children were fragmented and that the lack of integration meant children "fell through the cracks." He recommended a complete restructuring of public services for children, including that a Minister for Children and Families be appointed to co-ordinate integrated services for children.[166]

On September 23, 1996 the Premier announced the creation of the first Ministry for Children and Families.[167] The ministry was to be responsible for the delivery of services for children formerly provided by the Ministries of Health,

[165] I.e., for social assistance recipients.
[166] The inquiry focused primarily on child protection services, but also reviewed child and youth services provided by all Ministries of the province.
[167] Enabled by the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, [RSBC 1996] Chapter 46.

Education, Attorney General, Women's Equality and Social Services. These services included:

- community health services
- youth forensic psychiatric services
- mental health services for children and youth
- alcohol and drug services
- public health (hearing, speech and language, nutrition)
- Kids at Risk
- school meal program
- summer school programs including the deaf-blind summer program
- youth custody centres
- youth probation
- child care programs
- child, family and community services program (including child protection)
- children in care services
- adoptions
- services to people with developmental or multiple disabilities.[168]

Income support (e.g., social assistance; Disability Benefits) functions were separated out and located under the Ministry of Human Resources.

The Ministry of Children and Families was subsequently named the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Community Living Services took on a rather marginalized place in overall scheme of MCFD after the reorganization. According to several government officials and community members who took part in key informant interviews and focus groups for the present research, child protection and child welfare approaches informed the dominant culture of the ministry following the reorganization.

[168] Ombudsman of British Columbia Annual Report 1996: Children and Youth Team, "Ombudsreport 1995" available at http://www.ombud.gov.bc.ca/publications/reports/report_1996/children_and_youth/after_gove.html